

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
REMARKS, WITH SENATOR JOHN WARNER, EN ROUTE TO DHAHRAN, SAUDI ARABIA,
FROM JEDDAH
OCTOBER 14, 1994

Q. Do you have any new intelligence today about Iraqi troop movements?

SECRETARY PERRY: Yes, we have some intelligence information this morning which suggests that a major part of this Republican Guard unit has stopped at a city about 70 kilometers south of the 32nd parallel. It looks like they might be digging in there. A more optimistic possibility is that they're just stopping there overnight. If they're digging in, we still have problems ahead of us because we're not satisfied with that -- we're not satisfied with that as a complying with what they have promised to do.

Q. Now you said this morning, you used the term "appropriate action," could you give any more details on what that might entail? What that could entail?

SECRETARY PERRY: No.

Q. In the last few days you've talked about -- you said it's unsatisfactory -- can't accept these deployments in Nasiria and you've also talked about a buffer zone, or tank-free zone for Republican Guard units that would be enforced by the allies. So when you say that this is unacceptable and we're going to build up and, if necessary, take appropriate action, aren't you talking about military action?

SECRETARY PERRY: Yes, we're talking about military action. But, I won't go beyond that to describe what form of military action.

Q. Is the digging in that's going on -- you mentioned this morning a figure of a "division plus" Republican Guard. Is that what you're talking about that's digging in in this particular location? A division plus type of situation?

SECRETARY PERRY: It looks like it's about a division, but this is very preliminary information. I wouldn't want to try to estimate more precisely than that.

Q. Is this Nasiria. What city is this?

SECRETARY PERRY: Yes.

Q. Mr. Secretary: Are the moves they're making ambiguous to the extent that they could be either a sign of digging in or stopping for a temporary camp?

SECRETARY PERRY: Only in the sense of this is very recent information. I think after elapse of time of a day or so it will not be ambiguous. So by tomorrow at this time we ought to know.

Q. Is it safe to say that this is aerial intelligence obviously that's providing this information -- without getting into deep secrets?

SECRETARY PERRY: Yes.

Q. Is there any communication with Iraq at all, with the government on this?

SECRETARY PERRY: As far as I know, our government is not communicating with the government of Iraq. And I'll say more categorically we decided in the beginning we're not going to be negotiating with them on this position.

Q. Mr. Secretary, do you have any idea when you might declare this "no-drive zone" or whatever you want to call it in Iraq? Is that something that's coming...

SECRETARY PERRY: Any action we take of that sort we'd like it to be a coalition action so it involves consultation with our coalition partners and that's underway now. It depends on how long that takes. It's also complicated by the fact that there's debate going on in the United Nations, and ideally we'd like to have the resolution from the United Nations debate set and then have the coalition announcement be a follow-on to that.

Q. Did you receive any satisfaction on the issue of pre-positioning in your discussions with Saudi officials yesterday?

SECRETARY PERRY: Say that again.

Q. Did you stress the importance of the issue of pre-positioning Army equipment? Did you receive any clear answer from the Saudis in your discussions yesterday?

SECRETARY PERRY: Yes, we did discuss pre-positioning. We agreed on the importance of and the principle of pre-positioning. I did not seek, nor did I get commitments on a particular plan for pre-positioning. Those discussions will continue for the weeks and probably several months ahead. I believe a result of those discussions will be substantially more equipment pre-positioned after this crisis than we had before the crisis.

Q. In Saudi Arabia?

SECRETARY PERRY: In the region.

Q. May I ask a question of Senator Warner? Senator, when you go back to Congress, or just go back to Washington, what are you going to communicate to your Republican colleagues vis-à-vis your party's posture on this deployment?

SENATOR WARNER: In my judgment, the President acted decisively, timely and prudently, and the Secretary is over here to determine the extent of the cooperation that we can receive from the Gulf countries. Personally, I'm encouraged by the expressions of willingness to pick up some of the costs from the host nations because this is very important. On the Secretary's budget, this would be a cash drain which was not programmed and secondly, the Congress, I think will be far more supportive of these actions if they see a forthcoming willingness by the GCC [Gulf Cooperation Counsel] to pool assets and pick up the costs. I think the Congress on the whole is going to be very supportive of this action. Certainly to date, it's been performed magnificently under the leadership of the Secretary by the various troop commanders.

Q. Would you support military action, if necessary, to force those guards out of the area?

SENATOR WARNER: I think it's far premature to do that. I also want to compliment the Secretary. We've worked for many years together and I think any indication that we can do it better than Bush attitude which could inject a sort of an element of partisanship in this, that's being carefully avoided.

Thanks.

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